

REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE

1. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:
2. The present amendment adds claim 31, which includes the same features described below and included in previously allowed claims 18 and 29. The present invention is directed to a method and system for issuing printed objects from one of a plurality of terminals that involves tying a one of a plurality of smart cards assigned to operators of the terminals to a particular terminal such that the particular terminal can only be used with that smart card and the smart card can only be used with that particular terminal. This is achieved by running an initialization program in the terminal when the smart card is entered that generates a unique fingerprint of the local terminal by combining a clear code and a protected code stored in the memory of terminal, and then sends this fingerprint to the smartcard, which signs the fingerprint with its secret key. The local terminal also replaces a personal identification code stored in the memory of the smart card with a new personal identification code, and then the signed fingerprint is sent to a central control unit.
3. The use of smart cards storing PIN numbers to operate terminals for purchasing stamps is well-known (See, for example, Wright. et al. **1:17-2:62**).
4. The closest prior art of Wright, et al. discloses the use of a smart card that stores a balance to operate a terminal for dispensing postage as well as using a handshake recognition procedure between the card and terminal before proceeding with a transaction (Wright **Abstract; 9:45-10:52**). Wright further discloses initializing a card at a terminal by allowing a user to select a PIN and storing a secret key of the terminal on

the card for encrypting data transmitted to the terminal (Wright 6:40-63). The stored key allows the card to only be used with terminals that belong to an issuer that uses the same key (Wright 8:36-47). A card may also store a list of authorized terminals so that the card may only be used with those terminals (Wright 9:9-12), and a terminal may store a list of authorized cards such that only those cards can be used with the terminal (Wright 9:12-16).

5. Additionally, Bornemann, et al. (US Patent No. 6,199,752) discloses initializing chip cards for use with postage meter machines, which involves storing an identifier string on the chip cards (See, for example, Bornemann Abstract, 4:13-41). Bornemann does not disclose signing a fingerprint of a terminal with a secret key of the smart card and sending the signed fingerprint to a central control unit. Additionally, Bornemann does not disclose that the identifier string stored on the card replaces a previous identifier string, or that the identifier string serves as a personal identification code.

6. Therefore, with regard to claims 18 and 29, the prior art does not disclose, singly or in combination, "generating, by the local terminal, a unique fingerprint by combining the clear code and the protected code, sending by the local terminal to the smart card inserted in the local terminal, the generated fingerprint of the local terminal, generating, by the smart card, a signed fingerprint by signing the fingerprint of the local terminal with the secret key of the smart card, replacing the personal identification code in the smart card with a new personal identification code in the memory of the smart card, and sending the fingerprint signed by the smart card to the central control unit."

7. Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

8. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Mohammad A. Nilforoush whose telephone number is (571)270-5298. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Thursday 10 am - 6 pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Calvin Hewitt can be reached on (571)272-6709. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/M. A. N./
Examiner, Art Unit 3685

/Calvin L Hewitt II/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 3685